



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL JUSTICE and CONSUMERS

Directorate B: Criminal justice
Unit B.2 : Procedural criminal law

***Report from the Plenary meeting of the Victims' Rights Platform on the
revision of the Victims' Rights Directive
(Summary)
10 May 2022***

On 10 May 2022, the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers of the European Commission (hereafter: "the Commission") organised a **Plenary meeting of the Victims' Rights Platform** that was dedicated to the revision of the Victims' Rights Directive. It was an online meeting, via WebEx.

The event gathered representatives from EU networks, agencies, bodies and civil society organisations and provided an excellent forum to continue the consultations on the revision of the Victims' Rights Directive. The meeting was a continuation of the previous consultation with the members of the Platform held on 26 April 2022.

The meeting started with a welcoming address by representatives of the Procedural Criminal Law Unit.

It was followed by a discussion on **three key topics**:

I. Strengthening victims' access to justice

The Commission proposed the following measures: a right for victims to be accompanied; free legal aid; participation in criminal proceedings and a right to challenge decisions that affect victims directly.

The members of the Platform were generally in favour of the proposed measures on access to justice. The discussion focused on strengthening victims' legal representation and their legal participation. It was explored whether certain rights of victims could be strengthened in cases when they were not parties to criminal proceedings. Whilst victims can enjoy some rights without legal assistance, other rights such as the right to review a decision not to prosecute are extremely difficult to pursue without legal assistance. The participants expressed support to strengthen victims' rights to challenge decisions that affect victims directly. This should be accompanied by support measures to make the right effective. It is difficult for victims to challenge decisions without legal assistance. The members of the platform also supported strengthening victims' right to be heard by providing more details on how this could be achieved.

II. Enhancing victims' access to compensation and restoration

The Commission proposed strengthening victims' possibility to apply for compensation, as well as strengthening and simplifying victims' rights to reimbursement of expenses and free legal aid in civil proceedings to obtain compensation.

The participants supported the measures to strengthen victims' access to compensation. In addition, the members of the platform called on the Commission to strengthen the current provision on victims' right to reimbursement of expenses and to provide more guidelines on safeguards for victims in restorative justice processes.

III. Horizontal supportive measures to victims of crime with a focus on victims of war crimes

The discussion focused on how to strengthen support measures and access to justice for victims of war crimes. The participants agreed that gathering of the evidence, notably testimonies by victims of war crimes should be done in a victim-centred way. The following issues should be considered: notification to victims, return of property and how victims of war crimes are informed about the loss of their loved ones.

The participants suggested to include the following additional topics in the revision of the Directive: introduction of an obligation for the Commission to produce a report on the practical implementation of the Directive, not only a report on its compliance; strengthening victims' right to legal remedies.